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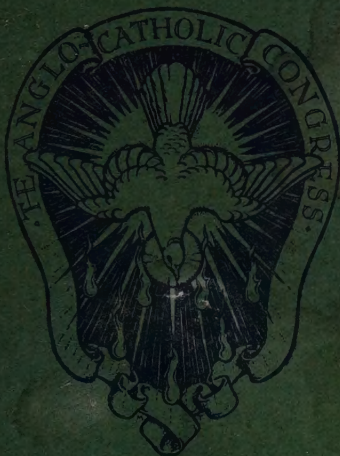


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Ceremonial

EREMONIAL means the outward adornment of a function, which helps to express its significance or adds to its impressiveness. It is employed on almost all important occasions and in every department of life. When the King holds a levée at the Court of St. James or opens Parliament in person, he does so 'in state,' that is with the elaborate ceremonial which has become customary on such occasions. The army, again, makes great use of ceremonial, partly in order to impress upon the world its power and importance, and partly to help secure discipline and uniformity.

Ceremonial is also a simple accompaniment of the actions of everyday life. We shake hands, bow, and take off our hats; and we mean these actions to express something that is in our minds. Some people do these things elaborately and make much of them, others just go through with them because they are customary. In the same way most people enjoy the organized parade of a State function or a mass demonstration, but others will

scarcely turn their heads to look. Yet ceremonial in one form or another does in fact appeal to nearly every one.


The Church for the same reasons makes considerable use of ceremonial ; and in church, as in the world outside, it is customary to use ceremonial which is based upon ancient tradition. When you attend any Church service you are likely to find ceremonial of some kind employed as a means of teaching and a help to worship and a method of adding to the impressiveness of a service ; that is, in other words, to express words and ideas in actions suited to them, to clothe and adorn the chief services of worship with beauty and dignity, and to enlist the whole person, body as well as soul, in the act of adoring the Creator.

The Prayer Book speaks of 'Rites and Ceremonies.' Now it is a common thing to hear people talk about ritual and ceremonial as though they were the same thing. But there is a strong distinction.

Rites are things said, ceremonies things done. When I take my hat off in greeting any one I am performing a ceremony ; but when I say, 'How do you do?' I am using a rite. So, in the Prayer Book, a rite means properly a form of service, and ceremonial refers to the method in which that service is performed. And here it may be noticed in passing that the Prayer Book, as a matter of fact, gives comparatively slight directions

4 Necessity of Ceremonies

about ceremonies, except some of the most important, leaving the manner in which the rites of the Church of England should be performed to be inferred very largely by common sense from the methods traditional in the Church.

N principle there is very little disagreement among Christians about the need of ceremonial; and yet it has been a fruitful source of controversy, especially since the beginning of the Oxford Movement, almost down to modern times. The dispute was not whether any ceremonial should be used or none, but how much ceremonial should be used and of what kind that ceremonial should be.

The plain truth is that some sort of ceremonial must be employed in almost any human activity. It is practically impossible to perform any action repeatedly and habitually without acquiring a set manner of performing it: in addition to the doing of a thing, there is the quite distinct question, how it is to be done. A very simple instance from everyday life will illustrate this point. Dinner is a universal human institution, with marked ceremonies attending it. We all lay the table in much the same way; knives and forks, plates and dishes, each have pretty much their own regular places on the board and their

own regular methods of use: and in every ordinary household the pudding is reserved until the meat course has been finished, and the guest is served before the members of the family. We may not be conscious of the fact, but in truth the eating of our dinner involves us in a most elaborate and detailed system of ceremonial.

It is the same with public worship. Certain things have to be done, and it is impossible to avoid having certain ways of doing them. The English Church has never done without ceremonial. But for many years before the Oxford Movement her services had, in many places, been formal, cold, and slovenly; and one result of the new life which that movement infused into her was the reform of her ceremonial of public worship. The question fundamentally is between doing things in a lifeless and ugly fashion, and doing them in such a way as to appeal to man's sense of beauty and order, and to illustrate the meaning of our actions in the expressive manner which has been evolved by many generations of our Christian forefathers, and is understood by our brethren scattered through the world.

The objections raised to taking thought and care about religious ceremonial are, therefore, really aimed not so much at the ceremonial itself, as at the doctrines of the Church which the ceremonial implies. It

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is natural enough for people who sit loose to Christian revelation, to dislike the Christian methods of conducting worship, and to wish for the substitution of other forms of their own devising. But in Anglo-Catholic churches in England to-day, Catholic ceremonial is a means by which they often attract and enlist in their congregations Church folk whose allegiance has previously been merely formal and unintelligent.

Nevertheless, elaborate ceremonial is sometimes also a means of repelling earnest people who are attracted to Catholic dogma, but do not enjoy pageantry. There is no special reason why everybody should like it. But everybody must at least get accustomed to certain simple forms and ceremonies; and generally people are repelled because they do not understand the meaning of these, rather than from any more deeply rooted objection. We shall, however, have more to say about this matter later on.



At this point we may distinguish between two main classes of religious ceremonies. Some ceremonial is mainly '*utilitarian*,' designed chiefly to fulfil a practical purpose; as, for instance, the custom of kneeling or standing to pray, and of sitting down to hear a lesson read; or as when instead of saying a form of words the priest '*presents*'

the alms at the altar. Other pieces of ceremonial have a more '*symbolical*' meaning. Instances of this would be our Lord's choice of water for the sacrament of baptism, to signify spiritual cleansing, or of bread and wine for the sacrament of the Eucharist, symbolizing spiritual food ; or the custom of marking different seasons by the use of different colours, gay or sombre, in the ornaments of the Church and the vestments of the ministers. Often ceremonies which were originally utilitarian, such as the use of lights, have since acquired a symbolical meaning, signifying in this case the light of the gospel and the Light of the World. The retention of such customs, with their added meaning, helps us greatly to realize our common heritage in the gospel with the Christians of former ages.

The origin of nearly all the ceremonial in use in Anglo-Catholic churches was utilitarian : it was once the obvious and ordinary thing to do. There are a hundred examples of this. The chasuble—our principle Mass vestment—was originally the Roman morning coat ; the stole was a muffler ; the cope a macintosh. The procession was an orderly walk from one place to another, or a method of carrying some sacred object from one church to another where it was needed. Candles were burned to give light in the dark places where Christians first had to worship ; oil lamps were burned

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to show up in the darkness an altar or shrine or tomb ; incense was offered to show that the worship of the old gods was now being given to Jesus Christ ; water was used for purposes of washing and cleansing.

Much of the personal ceremonial of minister and people is still what is called 'suited the action to the word.' Thus the lifting of the priest's hands at 'Lift up your hearts,' or at the 'Let us pray' before a collect, is a form of beckoning to the people to join with him in praise and prayer : and at the betrothal bridegroom and bride in turn take one another by the hand as they say the words 'I take thee to my wedded wife,' or, 'husband.'

It was all very simple and obvious, a natural ceremonial which grew up from ordinary usage. If Puritanism has been born a thousand years earlier than it was, it is difficult to see how it could then have objected to the use of vestments, lights, incense, processions, holy water, or various gestures and movements of ministers and congregation ; for all that was done was clearly requisite and useful, and could have roused no more opposition than the modern utilitarian adjuncts of worship, such as chairs, kneelers, hymn boards, electric lights, and font covers.

In process of time, however, what was originally utilitarian became conventionalized. The Church, like the State, is conservative about forms and habits. When the layman

discarded the *planeta* for the latest fashion in morning coats, and adopted a more convenient and efficient rainproof than the semi-circular *pluviale*, the Christian minister retained the old-fashioned clothes and continued to wear them in all his ministrations. The congregations approved this. It emphasized their continuity with the past for their clergy to be wearing the same clothes as had been worn in the ages of the great Fathers and defenders of the faith. So they seem always to have preferred not to introduce very modern fashions in church, but to keep more or less closely to the old.

After this conventionalizing process had continued for many years a further tendency in ceremonial began to show itself. This tendency was towards the decoration of the adjuncts of worship. Thus the chasuble, stole, and cope were made more ornamental, broad decorative 'orphreys' were applied or embroidered upon them, the finest materials were employed. Processions were also beautified and made more attractive to the eye. Candles not only went on burning after the Church had emerged from the catacombs, but more of them were used on great occasions. A suitable method of using incense was evolved, so that it was swung in similar fashion at the most obvious places in the liturgy: and the censer itself became a thing of beauty, often of precious metal. Water was taken

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from the baptismal font, as it had been specially blessed, and was used for sprinkling over persons and things intended to be blessed, and as a symbol of cleansing. Chalices, too, were made of precious metal and stones were set in them.

The same process of first conventionalizing and then decorating may be observed in many departments of life, and indeed in most of the ordinary things we use and see every day. A drainpipe, for instance, is a very necessary adjunct of domestic architecture, but it is not in the majority of cases a very beautiful object; yet the exquisitely decorated lead conduits which run down old battlemented buildings have become such a feature of that style of architecture, that sometimes they are now added for the sake of the design alone. People need not be shocked then if the stole is less like a muffler than it used to be, or if a cope does not look like a trench coat. In your worship in a Catholic Church you will be glad that old customs prevail, and that whatever is done recalls an earlier period of Church life.

Nevertheless, in the West, speaking generally, the Church has preserved the utilitarian tradition, and the ceremonial of our churches is based upon practical needs. Our ceremonies have not been, in the main, developed or introduced merely for their own sake, but are simple and useful, dignified and sane.

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THE question is often asked by controversialists: Is ceremonial pleasing to God? and the answer is given, to accord with the opinions of the questioner, by detaching a biblical text from its context and hurling it like a spiritual missile at his opponents. Yet nobody is convinced by this method. Texts from *Leviticus* can be produced to show, for instance, not merely that Almighty God is anxious for incense to be used in worshipping him, but that he is particular about the ingredients of it; while *Isaiah* may be quoted to prove that its very use is an abomination unto him. But this method of controversy by means of isolated texts, torn from their natural context in Holy Scripture, is both unintelligent and unprofitable: for not only common sense, but our Christian conscience tells us quite clearly that God likes ceremonial, as he likes all other legitimate human activities, if it is performed from a right motive, that is, for promoting his own glory or the edification of his people; and that he does not like it when these motives are absent. The question, therefore, is one with which we need not concern ourselves further.

But there is one useful and really relevant question. Does the ceremonial type of service edify man, and help him to offer acceptable worship? The answer to this cannot be a simple 'Yes' or 'No,' for there are many

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types of man. Yet viewing human nature as a whole, we should probably reply that, in the main, it does ; while we should admit that much depends upon the individual man. Some folk are not aesthetic nor emotional, and do not care for the elaboration of ceremonial. Any kind of pageantry is superfluous to them. For instance, there are the Quakers, a very devout religious body, who have always preferred a simple undecorated form of worship, without ceremony and as far as possible without rite. They think they get on better without these things, and believe them to be a definite hindrance in the approach to God. At the opposite extreme are numbers of highly aesthetic and emotional people. Art of every kind appeals to them and helps them. They are elevated by glorious architecture : fine music rouses them to worship : they are moved in spirit by impressive ceremonies and by exquisite rites. They worship better under such conditions.

The Catholic Church includes and caters for both these types. If it did not, it would fail to be the universal Church. Like the Lord, her Master, the Church knows what is in man and how like must be drawn by like. As in the world, so in the Church, the latter type is far more common, because there are few to whom one or other of these arts does not appeal. In most ordinary men the eye and the ear are capable of appreciating beauty,

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and, consequently, the Church as a general rule makes use of music and other ceremonial. But the other type has never been ignored. Nowhere perhaps is it better provided for than in a low Mass of the Carthusian rite ; in which there is a quietness, a stillness, a restraint, and a bareness, which provide the strongest contrast to the normal Mass of Christendom.

The ordinary Englishman appreciates ceremonial ; he likes it in State functions, on legal and parliamentary occasions, in military and naval manoeuvres, at his own At Homes and parties. The pageantry of such occasions impresses the mind, and the mind rouses its owner to enjoy them. As the English Church awakes to new life and activity so it begins to cater for the ordinary man, and revives a suitable ceremonial for its great occasions, the chief of which is the solemn offering of the Holy Sacrifice. It finds itself obliged to meet the world on its own ground. ' Imagination must be bribed with its own proper objects,' and religious worship cannot be left to die spiritually of cold and starvation. The world with all its pageantry, its impetuous rush of life, its appeal to the things of sight and sense, imposes upon the imagination and gradually crowds out and overpowers the things of the Spirit. It is for this reason that the Church steps down into the arena and opposes its grandeur—every facet of which

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speaks of God—to the glamour and attraction of the gilded ceremonial of the world.

We should, therefore, not be too impatient of ceremony, even if it does not greatly appeal to us, but think of our neighbour and the need to win him to the Church of Christ. We are not obliged to attend elaborate services. Every Anglo-Catholic church provides more low Masses than high Masses; and in them the ceremonial is always simple and quiet. It is just sufficient to obscure the personality of the officiant and to ensure some uniformity of action, without which we should be at the mercy of the individual priest.

Certainly there is need at the present time that Anglo-Catholics of the non-aesthetic type should more easily be able to find the services that would appeal to them. In country villages ceremonial is usually simple, from force of circumstances. But in London and every large town there should also be churches which, while preaching and practising the whole faith, do not feel obliged to provide a high Mass with incense, or processions with red cassocks and banners, or copes at choir offices, or albs for the servers, or the more ornate methods of exposition; there is a real danger of over-elaboration of ceremonial in some of the churches where the historic faith is held. It is not necessary to do everything which is lawful; it is far better that some churches should provide a maximum of

faith, devotion, and dogma, with a minimum of ceremonial, than that churches should strive to rival one another in display.

FINALLY it is necessary to note that different types of ceremonial are adopted in different Anglo-Catholic churches.

It is largely a matter of preference or local tradition. In one church 'Gothic' vestments are preferred, in other 'classic,' in another modern types: ceremonies are performed according to various uses, such as 'Sarum,' 'English,' or 'Roman.' These names are merely labels which have become attached to different customs and fashions: the real difference is largely one of the different dates at which the particular customs originated. The 'English' and 'Sarum' customs may be found to-day used in many Roman Catholic churches abroad, and the 'Roman' in many English churches. Sixteenth-century chasubles are worn in one place and seventeenth in another. It makes little difference which use is adopted provided that people do not quarrel about it, but do their best to make their own use as dignified and edifying as possible.

Antiquarians are naturally very eager to revive the best and most beautiful customs of previous ages: the average priest tries to copy the use which appears to have been

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most successful elsewhere, and most suited to the circumstances of his own people. All this is as it should be, and may help to evolve, in course of time, one use for the whole realm (if this should be found desirable). But the main consideration of each school of ceremonial must always be the edification of the faithful, so that they may more perfectly worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.

A BOOK FOR

FURTHER STUDY

Frere. Principles of Religious Ceremonial.

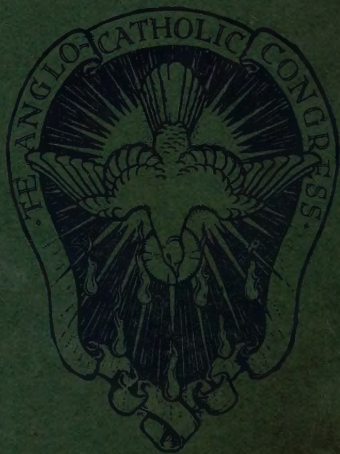


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